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You Lead Like a Girl: Gender and Children's Leadership Development

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“You Lead Like a Girl: Gender and Children’s Leadership Development”

ABSTRACT

Recent leadership initiatives encourage children, particularly girls, to defy gender stereotypes. Yet those creating and participating in these initiatives, like all members of our culture, have their own gender biases, have received gender socialization, and live in a society where the masculine is more valued than the feminine. We conducted participant observation of two gender segregated leadership summer camps to examine how camp counselors and directors teach leadership to boys and girls. We find counselors unintentionally reinforce gender stereotypes and promote gender-typical behavior while attempting to break down these same stereotypes and behavioral expectations. We argue the gender segregated environment leads to a problematic “separate but equal” approach to thinking about leadership that advances the individual abilities of boys and girls but does less to decrease gender disparities in emotional development, physical competition, or leadership styles. This research contributes to our understanding of how well-intentioned organizations and authorities, seeking to minimize gender disparities and develop strong leaders, unwittingly reproduce gender differences and perpetuate gender inequality.

INTRODUCTION

Children begin to absorb gender stereotypes and expectations in early childhood (Cvencek et al. 2011). By early elementary school, girls are less likely than boys to say that their own gender is "really, really smart." They are also less likely to opt into games described as intended for "super-smart" kids (Bian, Leslie, and Cimpian 2017). This pattern continues throughout the educational trajectory (Storage et al. 2016). There is growing interest in disrupting gender stereotypes and expectations (Eagly and Heilman 2016; Parker et al. 2017). Most Americans believe exposing children to toys and activities typically associated with another gender is a good thing. They also believe more emphasis should be placed on encouraging boys to talk about their feelings and teaching girls to stand up for themselves (Parker et al. 2017). Yet attempts to lessen gendered constraints are often less successful than intended (for examples, see Ridgeway 2011; Kane 2012; Kissane and Winslow 2016, and Ryan 2016). How does this gap between the desire to undo, or at least reduce, gendered expectations and the continued maintenance of gendered expectations and outcomes persist?

We focus on the mismatch between expectations and outcomes in the context of gender and leadership. Despite increased participation in sports, higher education, and the workforce, women are underrepresented in leadership positions (Budgeon 2014; Kay and Shipman 2014). Our research seeks to advance our understanding of this underrepresentation by examining how childhood leadership programs may affect future gender leadership disparities. How do the adults creating and implementing children's leadership initiatives reproduce or challenge gendered leadership behaviors and outcomes? To address this, we engaged in participant observation of two children's leadership day camps, which we refer to as GLEAM and BEAM (acronyms for Girls' Leadership Empowerment and Mentoring and Boys' Leadership Empowerment and Mentoring).¹

While there have been excellent studies looking at children's conformity and resistance to gender expectations at camp (McGuffey and Rich 1999; Moore 2001), this research addresses the role adults play in maintaining children's gendered expectations and behaviors. Both camps explicitly focus on

¹ The names of all camps, counselors, administrators have all been changed to protect confidentiality.

developing leadership skills and self-confidence, as well as encouraging children to defy gender stereotypes. Given this focus, we were interested in how camp activities and counselors' statements subverted or reinforced gender stereotypes. How, for example, do camp authority figures' stated attitudes toward gender and socialization intentions line up with the messages they **actually** send to children?

Counselors and directors at GLEAM and BEAM frequently downplayed the role of gender in leadership development. They framed leadership obstacles as individual level phenomena and assured campers they could do anything they put their minds to, regardless of gender. As a result, campers learned simplistic and individualistic strategies for developing leadership skills, such as cultivating a positive attitude and finding strong role models. This focus may provide helpful tools for individual boys and girls, but it fails to address broader structural and cultural constraints that impact gender inequality in leadership.

As we will discuss, there were surface level similarities in how GLEAM and BEAM counselors discussed leadership, but the underlying styles, content, and supporting messages that made up the substance of leadership lessons were strikingly different. Ultimately, these differences reflected divergent ideas about gender and leadership. If taken seriously, these differences will continue to socialize children in gender stereotypical ways and reproduce gender differences in leadership styles and opportunities.

In the following sections we describe the camps in more detail and review the relevant scholarship pertaining to gender, leadership, and barriers to and advancements in gender equality. We then discuss our data, methods, and findings. We conclude by discussing the future implications of our results.

THEORETICAL ORIENTATION

Even when parents want to expand the boundaries of gender, they often feel pressure to teach their children to do gender “correctly” by conforming to the gender binary (West and Zimmerman 1987; Kane 2012; Ryan 2016). Yet parents, authority figures, and other adult role models can also disrupt gendered

beliefs, especially for girls (Riegle-Crumb et al. 2006; Levy et al. 2013; Rahilly 2015). Gender socialization has important implications for leadership. The gender socialization messages children receive and the gendered nature of the resources and opportunities they have access to affect perceived leadership ability and future leadership opportunities. For example, boys still spend more time in formal competitions (e.g., sports tournaments, debate teams, and chess competition) than girls (Friedman 2013). Competition helps children develop confidence, independence, ambition, and strategizing skills, all of which are associated with leadership (Eagly and Heilman 2016). Because boys compete more frequently, they are more likely to acquire skills and characteristics associated with strong leadership.

Gender stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination also affect the assessment of leadership potential (Shields 2013; Brescoll 2016). Authority, agency, rationality and other characteristics associated with successful leadership are seen as masculine, contributing to perceptions of men as more natural leaders than women (Eagly 2007; Hoobler, Lemmon, and Wayne 2014; Hechavarria and Ingram 2016). We examine what happens when adults attempt to disrupt these inequalities by teaching boys and girls leadership skills. Do leadership camps that try to teach children to be strong leaders and challenge gender stereotypes succeed, or do they reproduce these stereotypes despite their intentions?

Adult Attitudes, Cultural Messages, and Children's Understanding of Gender (In)Equality

Even when they do not intend to, adults often socialize children in a gender stereotypical manner (Kane 2012; Ryan 2016). Kane (2012) finds parents can fall into a gender trap, a set of expectations and structures that inhibit social change and reinforce the limits of gender. Research on the mothers of gender questioning, nonconforming, and transgender children finds many mothers provide trans affirming messages and challenge dominant gender beliefs to a degree (Ryan 2016). They help children imagine alternative gender possibilities, provide children with knowledge and confidence to challenge gendered logics, and support their children's identities and choices. Yet the way they talk about gender sends the message that while it is okay for boys to like "girl" things and vice versa, there are in fact boy and girl things, and children normally like gender typical things.

On the other hand, authority figures and role models can disrupt gendered beliefs, especially for women (Riegle-Crumb et al. 2006). High school and college women who learn about successful women in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) fields are more likely to do well in STEM classes, feel a greater sense of belonging among STEM classmates, and have scientific career aspirations. Girls who see other women in STEM fields are less likely to associate these subjects with masculinity and display more confidence in their own abilities (Levy et al. 2013). Yet girls must see similarities between themselves and role models to receive these beneficial effects. When girls do not identify with role models, their aspirations and self-perceptions can be negatively affected (Asgari et al. 2012).

When they do intentionally address gender, parents are often more interested in lessening feminine gender socialization (Messner and Bozada-Deas 2009; Kane 2012). One reason for this may be that masculine characteristics are more frequently associated with professional success (Friedman 2013; Kissane and Winslow 2016; Alfrey and Twine 2017). Another is that a soft essentialist understanding of sex and gender frames girls' nature as more potentially malleable than boys' nature, which is understood as more rigid and driven by biology (Messner 2011). Adults are more likely to see girls as "flexible choosers" with the freedom to decide whether or not to participate in formerly masculine arenas. This view portrays girls as bridging two realms - their natural realm of home and family and a chosen public realm of culture, politics, career, and sports. Boys are more frequently seen as defined by biology. Their participation in sports and public life is attributed to their rowdy, hyperactive, testosterone fueled nature. Such beliefs persist into adulthood, as when middle and upper class women's work outside the home is seen as a choice but men's (regardless of class) is not (Messner and Bozada-Deas 2009).

Soft essentialism also manifests in cultural messages encouraging girls to cultivate a mix of stereotypically masculine and feminine attributes. Magazines aimed at teen and pre-teen girls encourage readers to conform to some traditional norms of femininity (e.g., being nice and polite) while also asserting individuality (McRobbie 1991). Girl power femininity implies girls are powerful and can do anything they want, but also strongly encourages them to appear heterosexual and feminine in order to sustain gender complementarity and hierarchy (Ringrose 2006; Schippers 2007; Budgeon 2014). This

understanding of power and femininity emphasizes individual choice and ability, obscuring and the role of broader structural forces in maintaining gender disparities (Acker 1990; Cairns and Johnston 2015; Rauscher and Cooky 2016). Emphasizing individual choice reconciles the dominant discourse of gender equality with patterned gender outcomes (Volman and Ten Dam 1999). Gendered inequalities are explained away as different preferences.

While adults' attitudes, organizational initiatives, and cultural messages influence children, children can accept, reject, or repurpose what they learn (Thorne 1993; Moore 2001). This combination of accepting, resisting, and repurposing cultural dictates persists across the lifecourse. For example, in their study on women's participation in fantasy sports, Kissane and Winslow (2016) found participants simultaneously resist and reproduce gendered dynamics by questioning gender stereotypes in some cases and accepting some level of gender inferiority in others. Players often accepted gender stereotypes about women as a group, but positioned themselves as atypical women who defied these stereotypes (Kissane and Winslow 2016). Although our research examines the initiatives adults create to teach children about gender and leadership, it is important to remember that children can interpret and react to these initiatives in unpredictable ways.

Gender, Emotions, and Perceptions of Leadership Ability

The camps we examine are a response to the growing interest in gender and leadership, as well as the push for more women to enter leadership positions (Eagly and Heilman 2016). So why, despite interest in increasing the number of girls and women in leadership positions, aren't there more women leaders (Parker et al. 2017)? Some research focuses on the role leadership capital plays in selecting leaders. High levels of early leadership capital lead to future opportunities that give access to further leadership capital and opportunities (Bourdieu 1990; Fitzsimmons & Callan 2016). Gender affects children's leadership capital accumulation. Growing up, girls still spend less time in formal competitions, such as sports tournaments and debate competitions (Friedman 2013). Competition helps children develop leadership capital in the form of independence, self-confidence, ambition, and strategic decision making skills

(Eagly and Heilman 2016). Because boys compete more often, they are more likely to acquire skills and characteristics associated with strong and decisive leadership.

Other research focuses on how gender stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination affect leadership opportunities (Shields 2013; Brescoll 2016). Cultural beliefs about masculine and feminine characteristics disadvantage women in leadership evaluations (Eagly 2007). Men are more frequently seen as natural leaders because authority, agency, rationality, emotional self control, career motivation and other characteristics associated with strong leadership are seen as masculine (Hoobler, Lemmon, and Wayne 2014; Hechavarria and Ingram 2016). Many characteristics linked to poor leadership, such as passivity, low ambition, irrationality, a preoccupation with emotions, and lack of emotional control, are associated with femininity (Shields 2013; Eagly and Heilman 2016).

Cultural beliefs affect how people are perceived and evaluated. Aspiring women leaders encounter more skepticism than men about their ability to control emotions, be appropriately competitive, and make rational decisions (Brescoll 2016). Gendered beliefs also affect how individuals see themselves and the choices they make (Cech 2013). Hierarchies are created and sustained through relational dynamics (Schippers 2007). Men and women must see themselves as sufficiently different in a way that justifies men's increased power and privilege for gender inequality to persist (Ridgeway 2011). To achieve a more complete change, gender expectations must be disrupted. Simply providing new opportunities and positive messaging for girls and women is not enough (Budgeon 2014). If outdated cultural expectations regarding the obligations for girls and women persist in the face of new opportunities, change will remain elusive and incomplete (Rauscher and Cooky 2016). Our study helps to uncover how children's leadership training, and the presence or lack of gendered messaging associated with this training, can make change or stasis more likely.

DATA AND METHODS

GLEAM and BEAM take place on a Midwestern college campus. Both camps are non-profit and affiliated with the college's educational outreach program, which provides programming for interested area primary and secondary school students. The director of the educational outreach program, Courtney,

is also a local middle school teacher and the GLEAM camp director. Given her position as director of all educational outreach programming, she technically oversaw Mike, the BEAM camp director, and all BEAM activities. Nonetheless, Mike and the BEAM counselors seemed to have autonomy over BEAM programming and activities. We never heard Mike or any of the BEAM counselors mention Courtney or any other source of external expectations placed on them.

GLEAM began in 2009 and BEAM began in 2013. When we started our research in 2015, GLEAM had 400 campers (200 per session), 12 counselors, and 13 assistant counselors. BEAM had 150 campers (75 per session), 6 counselors, and 7 assistant counselors.² All GLEAM and BEAM staff identified as heterosexual and cisgender. Over 90 percent of the staff at both camps was white, reflecting the demographics of the surrounding community. GLEAM counselors were all state certified teachers in their mid to late twenties, working at elementary and middle schools during the academic year. Most were in long-term relationships, recently engaged, or recently married. None had children. GLEAM assistant counselors were local high school and college students. Many of them planned to become teachers after college.

BEAM counselors were also state certified teachers, working at local elementary, middle, and high schools during the academic year. Many coached school sports teams as well. Counselors ranged in age from their mid twenties to mid thirties. The majority were married and had children. The assistant counselors were students attending nearby high schools and colleges during the academic year. These counselors varied in career aspirations. Some had plans to become teachers or school counselors. Others planned on going into law, medicine, or business. Many of the assistant counselors went to the same college and learned about the camp because they had run track with one of the counselors who had graduated the year before and now worked at a local elementary school.

² BEAM and GLEAM campers were recruited through informational booths at community events, flyers in community businesses, word of mouth, and social media. Camp registration is first come, first served until camps are full.

BEAM and GLEAM campers ranged in age from six to 13 and attended local elementary and middle schools during the academic year. Because they were not the direct focus of our research, we did not ask campers about their race, gender, or sexuality, but the majority of campers appeared to be white. Counselors told us the majority of campers were middle class, reflecting the demographics of the surrounding community. The names of the camps have been changed, but were picked deliberately. GLEAM is meant to have a slightly feminine ring to it; BEAM is meant to have a slightly more masculine connotation. The real names also had these elements.

All GLEAM and BEAM activities were chosen and planned by the camp director and camp counselors during a series of planning meetings. At these meetings, the director and counselors planned each week's activities and events. They also decided the age of the campers each counselor would work with, who their assistant counselor(s) would be, and what extra activities they were responsible for (beyond the general activities every counselor and assistant counselor did with their primary group of campers). At both camps, counselors began and ended the day with their "core" group of campers. They also did activities with their core group before and after lunch. During the rest of the day, assistant counselors would accompany campers from activity to activity, while counselors would stay in the same room or area to run an activity with rotating groups of campers. At GLEAM, these activities were divided into the themes of (1) math and science, (2) technology, (3) drama, and (4) expression (activities related to speaking up and expressing feelings). At BEAM, the activities were divided into (1) strategic games and problem solving, (2) physical games and activities, (3) engineering, math, and science projects, and (4) leadership skills.³ Each counselor was in charge of one of these four sets of activities and would implement an activity with various groups of campers (adjusting the difficulty of the activity based on the age of the group) throughout each day.

Camps were an ideal site for this research for many reasons. First, the camps we observed were explicitly focused on leadership. Second, the camps encompassed a mix of formal learning based

³ We describe specific examples of these activities in the discussion of our findings.

activities, social activities, project based activities, and physical activities, allowing us to see approaches to leadership across a variety of contexts. Finally, we were able to watch many counselors and many groups of campers do the same things multiple times over multiple weeks. This gave us a sense of which exchanges were idiosyncratic or anomalous and which were more patterned and pervasive in a relatively brief amount of time.

We engaged in over 200 hours of participant observation. We primarily observed camp sessions held in June and July of 2015 and 2016. We also observed camp planning meetings held four weeks and two weeks prior to the first camp session each year and counselor debriefing sessions, which occurred at the end of the day throughout the first week of each camp. We supplement this with information gained from camp websites, lesson plans, the daily emails sent home to parents summarizing each day's major activities, and camp social media posts.

We took a grounded theory approach to our observation and analysis. Both authors recorded their observations. These notes were read multiple times and memos were written to help identify significant events and patterns. Memos and notes were then coded according to themes that inductively emerged throughout the research process (Glaser and Strauss 1967). As research progressed, we began to narrow our focus to examine how gender influenced the leadership lessons taught at the camps.

Gender is our primary focus. Although relevant, less significance was placed on camper age, class, race, or sexuality. While we often refer to campers' ages in activity descriptions, age is not a major focus of this research.⁴ There were situations where age, class, and sexuality became more salient in interactions, and we describe a few such occurrences. It is possible our position as white, heterosexual,

⁴ Campers engaged in similar activities based on similar themes, but the actual content and difficulty of activities was often adjusted based on camper age. We did observe a few patterns based on camper age. Younger campers at both GLEAM and BEAM seemed more excited about activities and were more likely to fully participate. As the groups got older, campers became more likely question activities and make more comments about whether they liked them or not. At GLEAM, some of the older campers displayed a mildly mocking attitude toward the activities they deemed uninteresting or childish. At both camps, counselors working with older campers dealt with more behavioral issues, which affected how they ran activities. At BEAM, if a counselor thought campers were "acting up," he would often try to connect the activity to a lesson about respect or good behavior. BEAM counselors addressed behavioral issues in front of the entire group of campers, regardless of whether issues were caused by an individual or larger minority. Clear behavioral issues were very rare at GLEAM, but on the one occasion a counselor had a concern about camper behavior, she took the camper away from the group to talk to her.

middle class, cisgender women influenced what we observed, as well as what camp staff and participants revealed to us, making us less sensitive to issues of class, race, and sexuality (Bonilla-Silva 2010; Musto 2014). It is also likely that race, class, age, and sexuality appeared less relevant because while camps were gender segregated, the race, class, age, and sexual orientations of staff and participants was largely similar across camps.

Counselors generally seemed untroubled by our presence. There are likely a few reasons for this. First, despite the extensive amount of planning and organization that went into the camps, parts of each day could also be hectic and unpredictable. Early on in each camp session, counselors did not have much spare time to think about our presence, and once things slowed down and routines were better established, we had become familiar and unremarkable. Additionally, camp activities occurred across the college campus. College faculty and staff frequently slowed or stopped to briefly observe camp activities as they walked by. Although our presence was more consistent, campers and counselors were used to being observed by outsiders.

The major difference we observed in counselor reception was that BEAM counselors were more likely to initiate conversations with us while campers were busy with activities. They asked follow up questions about our research and shared their perspectives on the camp and campers. This is probably partly because as cisgender women researchers, we stuck out more at BEAM. Another likely contributing factor is that BEAM counselors frequently talked to each other when campers were doing activities, whereas GLEAM counselors typically participated in activities with the campers or circulated among the campers and talked to them. BEAM counselors were also more likely to assume we were bored⁵ and a few seemed to initially feel an obligation to entertain us, as if they were our hosts. Nothing we observed at GLEAM suggested that counselors worried about whether we were bored or felt any need to entertain us.

⁵ A few said things to us like “this must be so boring for you.”

Campers initially took more interest in us. We each followed a different group of campers every day. While our presence was less noticed and commented on at GLEAM, campers at both camps were initially curious. We found the best strategy was to introduce ourselves to the group we were shadowing first thing in the morning. We told them we were doing research on the camps and said we would be following their group for the day and that they could ignore us or ask questions if they wanted. Most campers at GLEAM treated us like a cross between an older camper and temporary visitor. Campers did not assume we were experts on camp and many were eager to tell us about it (especially those that had come for multiple years). They never asked us questions about camp rules, schedules, or expectations, suggesting that they did not see us as authority figures.

At BEAM, we were treated like outside observers but typically quickly ignored once we introduced ourselves. There were a few exceptions. For example, one boy came up to the second author and asked how she was allowed at camp since she was a girl. Another time, a counselor told boys not to make jokes about “nuts” in front of a lady (the second author). Finally, when one boy became separated from his group and distressed, he approached the first author and asked for help. He looked like he was holding back tears and we suspect he approached her because he did not want boys or men to see him cry, not because he saw the researcher as an authority figure. Before the first author could do anything, a counselor saw the interaction and intervened. All of these interactions happened on the first day of camp. We became less of a source of novelty for campers and were accepted as an unremarkable feature of the camp as each week progressed.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Gender and Conceptualizations of Barriers to Leadership

GLEAM and BEAM had similar objectives, including building leadership skills, developing self-confidence, fostering an understanding of diversity and respect for others, and promoting healthy lifestyles. Yet campers’ gender influenced how counselors thought about leadership. GLEAM counselors confidently discussed their perceptions of the biggest leadership obstacles girls faced - low self-esteem, “mean girls” and bullies, shyness and the inability to express one’s thoughts, and blatant gender

stereotypes. BEAM counselors rarely linked leadership obstacles to gender. They saw goofing off, being disrespectful, and lacking initiative as genderless leadership impediments. The absence of an **involved** father was the only gendered barrier BEAM counselors discussed. This emphasis on uninvolved fathers allowed BEAM counselors to reconcile their views of boys as natural leaders with their participation in a boys' leadership camp. Despite differing perspectives, counselors at both camps suggested simplistic individual level solutions for overcoming leadership obstacles. These solutions imply leadership deficits are best conquered by cultivating a positive attitude and finding a strong role model. All campers were elementary and middle school aged, limiting the complexity of gender-related discussions. Yet these simplistic, individual-level portrayals of gender obstacles inaccurately frame gender as largely inconsequential and the barriers to gender inequality as minimal and easily overcome.

The individual level focus emerged during the pre-camp planning meetings. Here counselors chose daily themes (e.g., “brave,” “friendship and kindness” “teamwork”), brainstormed role models and activities to pair with each theme, selected the role models and activities they liked best, and then spent the majority of their time ironing out details related to when activities would occur, how much time was needed, and what supplies were necessary. The specifics of each camp day were extremely well organized as a result. Yet there was no discussion of systemic social or political issues affecting gender inequality in leadership. Counselors capitalized on their pre-existing knowledge of cultural role models, children's books, and educational activities that could embody their positive “believe in yourself and you can do unbelievable things” style messages. Counselors did not receive training or resources to learn about how larger structures of inequality might contribute to gender biases and unequal outcomes in leadership. If they were familiar with any of the broader research on gender and leadership, they did not mention it.⁶ This produced a very narrow narrative regarding the relationship between gender and leadership that positioned leadership success or failure in the realm of the individual.

⁶ They did mention other education research, however, such as Dweck's (2008) research on fixed versus growth mindsets. This was not provided as part of their camp training. It was just research they were familiar with from their educational training.

GLEAM counselors viewed low self-esteem, bullies, shyness, and blatant gender stereotypes as the biggest barriers to leadership for girls. They taught girls to change the way they thought about themselves to overcome these barriers. The lessons and activities on the third day of camp were related to the theme of perseverance. In one activity, girls were given a sheet with negative statements like “I’m not good at this” and “I give up.” They had to rewrite each statement in a positive and encouraging way. Girls wrote things like “I’ll be better if I try harder.” These activities were then connected to “girl power” statements about how girls could do anything. In their concluding remarks to the reframing activity, counselors said things like “don’t ever let anyone tell you you can’t do something because you’re a girl.”

GLEAM counselors discussed the role gender played in girls’ leadership abilities and opportunities. Yet gendered obstacles were framed as easily overcome. Counselors pointed to role models as proof girls can do anything if they ignore other people’s negativity. One of the featured role models was Misty Copeland, the first black principal dancer at the American Ballet Theater.⁷ Counselors said Copeland’s commitment and perseverance were the keys to her success. As part of the lesson, we observed Miss Carly⁸ read Misty Copeland’s (2014) book, *Firebird*, to a group of fourth and fifth grade campers. In this picture book, Copeland encourages a young black girl to become a ballerina. After she finished, Carly asked what the girls thought of the book. The first camper to respond said “I like her outfit.” Another asked if Misty was married (Carly had gotten married a few weeks before camp began, and marriage and weddings were a favorite topic of conversation in free time). The girls discussed whether Misty was married. One said “If Misty is married then the girl in the book could be her daughter.” Carly eventually redirected the conversation, emphasizing that Misty’s story was about perseverance and overcoming obstacles.

Carly then played an Under Armour commercial featuring Copeland (Dockterman 2014). The commercial zooms in on Copeland’s lean and muscular form as she warms up and energetically dances in

⁷ At GLEAM, a different role model was featured every day. Other role models included Ellen DeGeneres, Malala Yousafzai, and women Olympic athletes.

⁸ Campers typically addressed counselors as Mr. or Miss. Counselors alternated between referring to each other as Mr. or Miss and just referring to each other by first name. We mirror these patterns in our notes.

an Under Armour sports bra and underwear while we hear a series of girls read portions of a mock rejection letter informing Copeland she will not be admitted into ballet school because she does not have the right body. We observed this lesson with four different sets of campers and counselors. Counselors emphasized the same individualistic girl power message in every discussion - that girls should follow their dreams and ignore criticism. Misty Copeland clearly faced larger structural and cultural barriers, especially related to racism in the ballet world and culture at large. In the author's note at the end of *Firebird*, Copeland explains she never saw girls with brown skin or curly hair in the ballet books she read as a child. Yet race was not mentioned in any of the GLEAM discussions; the lesson was to keep trying and ignore negative comments. This classless, raceless gender messaging, which assumes a common feminine experience, is characteristic of empowerment messaging aimed at girls (McRobbie 1991; Budgeon 2014). It suggests a commonality among girls' experiences that ignores intersectionality and obscures the role cultural and structural dynamics in maintaining gender relationality, hegemony, and inequality. It also gives campers a limited and inaccurate understanding of the complex obstacles women leaders face (Rauscher and Cooky 2016). Any success or failure they encounter will likely be attributed to their individual abilities, ignoring the very real, but less visible, forces that sustain inequality.

Counselors referred to BEAM as a "mini boot camp" for boys to learn social, physical, and leadership skills, especially if they were not learning these skills at home. The most experienced counselors were especially likely to discuss connections between a lack of masculine role models and low levels of leadership capital. The following observation of outdoor team building activities illustrates this perspective:

During Alex's activity, the boys seemed particularly uninterested. Half of the group sat on the side and did not participate. When the boys moved on to Mr. Aaron's activity, Alex followed. He told the boys they were being disrespectful and that they better start behaving. Aaron then continued, telling the boys that they need to listen and participate. One boy started to giggle. Aaron pointed to him and said, "You need to grow up. Go sit over there" and motioned to a nearby tree. The boy sheepishly walked over to the tree and sat down. Aaron continued his lecture. He called out some boys, pointing to them and saying things like "I know you can get sucked into the negative behavior" or "you've been instigating the group all day." He then told the boys they could turn their day around. Once the boys started the next activity, Aaron came over to talk with me. He told me this group is a bunch of screwballs and that he's had some of the boys [in his group of campers] before so he

knows not to take crap from them. He said that BEAM functions like a boot camp and that some of these boys need it and have problems because they don't have dads who are involved in their lives.

Other counselors echoed these sentiments. They felt the father-son relationship was integral for developing a boy's character and leadership potential. BEAM counselors saw themselves as role models who could foster or supplement the skills boys might otherwise learn from men at home. Counselors did not distinguish between boys raised by single mothers and boys that had uninvolved or very busy fathers. They believed boys were harmed regardless of whether their fathers were physically absent or present but uninvolved. Therefore, although their understanding of leadership development could have been framed in terms of class and gender, it was not.

Yet counselors' concerns about uninvolved fathers were based more on vague cultural narratives than campers' actual experiences or living conditions. When the third counselor (Ethan) brought up the uninvolved fathers issue with the second author, she asked if this was a problem a lot of boys at BEAM faced. Ethan seemed surprised by the question and said that, on the contrary, most of the boys were from "really solid" families with involved parents. When asked if he was thinking of any campers in particular, Ethan seemed slightly annoyed. "No, it's not like that" he said. "It's not usually any one of them . . . It's just happening more and more these days." In another interaction, Ben, one of the first counselors to work at BEAM, told the first author about his participation in camp:

Yeah, when Mike [the camp director] first asked me to do this, I wasn't sure if I wanted to give up part of my summer. But now I couldn't imagine not doing it. It's great and there's such a range of boys. Some have dads, but they don't do much with them at home so they come here. And some don't have dads. But a lot have dads that are really involved. They're really involved with their family and you can tell. Dads and moms. Everyone's involved in the family.

This vague and slightly confused statement was characteristic of BEAM counselors' discussions of uninvolved fathers. Beyond these statements, nothing we observed suggested absent or uninvolved fathers were a particular problem for campers. Boys were dropped off at camp every weekday morning at 8 a.m. and picked up around three in the afternoon. Mothers and women babysitters were more likely to drop off and pick up, but we also saw many fathers picking up campers on a daily basis. Fathers were especially likely to drop BEAM campers off on the first day and arrive an hour or two before the end of the last day

of camp to watch the closing ceremonies and take campers home. The family friendly reputation, high rate of married-couple headed families, and favorable quality of life ratings of the area in which the camps took place also serve to complicate counselors' narratives about absent and uninvolved fathers (Area Life Study 2016; Area⁹ Demographics Data 2016).¹⁰

BEAM was created four years after GLEAM and imitated GLEAM's model of providing leadership training in a single gender environment. Yet BEAM counselors did not believe gender presented many leadership obstacles for boys. They saw boys as natural leaders who would benefit from fine tuning and practicing their skills. The research on gender and leadership shows this view of boys and men as natural leaders is fairly common (Eagly 2007; Ridgeway 2011; Hoyt and Murphy 2016). The emphasis on uninvolved fathers allowed BEAM counselors to reconcile their views on gender and leadership with their participation in a boys' leadership training camp. Framing leadership training as necessary for boys raised in overly feminine or resource deprived environments allowed their participation in boy's' leadership training to coexist with their view of boys as innate leaders. In order to avoid contradictions between their thoughts and actions, however, they had to ignore the competing perception that most of the campers came from "solid families" with involved fathers.

Challenge, Competition, and Differential Skill Development

Most activities at GLEAM were collaborative; competition was rarely involved. Girls were taught to encourage one another and create a supportive communal atmosphere. Most BEAM activities had winners and losers. Boys were trained to use competition to motivate themselves and others. Throughout this

⁹ In reality, the first citation contains the name of the county in which the camps took place and the second citation contains the name of the town in which the camps took place. For confidentiality reasons, we have replaced the town and county names with "Area."

¹⁰ In 2016, married couple families made up 82 percent of all families in the area (compared to 73 percent nationally). Female-alone headed households only made up 11 percent of families (compared to 20 percent nationally) (Area Demographics Data 2016). We do not have information on the marital status of campers' parents, but there was no evidence that campers came from families that were significantly different from the general population in the area. We also do not have information about the average hours parents, especially fathers, worked per week, but we cannot find any evidence that fathers, or any workers in this area, work a higher number of hours per week than the national average. In 2016 study on the area, community members rated their quality of life as an average of 8.5 on a 10 point scale, indirectly suggesting that overwork is not a major problem (Area Life Study 2016).

section, we discuss how variations in challenge and competition reinforce gender differences in leadership capital and potentially influence future leadership styles. Because leadership is correlated with masculine characteristics and skills, boys are more likely to benefit from gendered leadership training, reproducing gender gaps (Eagly and Heilman 2016). If the socialization elements of these activities are not acknowledged, differences in training, and the differential skills acquired from this training, may reinforce beliefs that boys are naturally more competitive and girls are naturally more communal (Ridgeway 2011)..

Competition pervaded BEAM. Even when in groups, boys competed against other groups for the best time, strategy, or performance. Running out of time was common during BEAM activities. Most activities were challenging and had a clear outcome signaling the group was finished. A few activities were only completed by a handful of groups. One example was a code breaking activity. Each group was given a lockbox and piece of paper containing a clue: a series of letters and the equation $A=10$. Campers had to figure out the numerical value of other letters and translate the letters in the clue into numbers to unlock the box. Inside the box was a code (a long series of numbers and the message “the third time’s the charm”) and a smaller lockbox (the combination was every third number in every third line in the series). The lockbox contained more locks. The boys had to use the clues in the boxes and other clues hidden around the room to open each lock. This was especially difficult because some of the clues placed around the room were intentionally misleading, and others were hard to decipher. Less than a third of the groups were able to unlock all of the locks by the end of the allotted time.

There was always enough time to finish activities at GLEAM. Girls often had extra time, which they spent sitting around, talking, or watching music videos with educational or girl power themes. This was partially because most GLEAM activities were participation based. Girls were expected to do something, but there was rarely a clearly defined winning outcome. For example, in one Drama session, girls played a game called “The Doctors.” The five girls who volunteered to be doctors sat on a bench. The rest of the group sat on the floor facing them and asked nonsense medical questions (e.g., “How do you cure a bad case of the stripes?”). The doctors answered by each saying one word at a time until one

said “the end.” This usually produced a funny nonsense answer. For example, the response to the stripes question was:

Girl 1: A
Girl 2: bad
Girl 3: case
Girl 4: of
Girl 5: the
Girl 1: stripes
Girl 2: is
Girl 3: cured
Girl 4: by
Girl 5: eating
Girl 1: apples
Girl 2: and
Girl 3: drinking
Girl 4: polka-dots
Girl 5: until
Girl 1: you
Girl 2: puke!
Girl 3: The end!

Counselors encouraged girls to participate and demonstrate effort, but whatever that effort lead to was seen as a valid outcome.

As a result, however, GLEAM campers were rarely clearly challenged by activities. Counselors talked about perseverance and recovering after making mistakes, but campers were not given opportunities to test out these skills. Research suggests some degree of failure and disappointment in the face of challenging circumstances can enhance resilience and personal growth (King and Rothstein 2010). Dealing with complex situations, where success is not guaranteed, can foster leadership development (Rothstein et al. 2016). While encountering adversity or failure can produce feelings of cynicism and victimization, leaders who are able to reflect on the adversity they face report that difficult situations helped them to mature, adapt, and fine tune their skills (Elkington and Breen 2016). Combining some of BEAM’s competition and challenge with GLEAM’s open discussion and reflection would likely help both groups of campers develop leadership skills.

Another way to understand how GLEAM and BEAM approached challenge and competition is to compare each camp’s final activity. At both camps there was an activity campers participated in every

day throughout the week and performed for their parents on the final day of camp. At BEAM this was an athletic game called Tchoukball. It requires a foam ball and two square shaped frames laced with netting and bungee-cords. The rules state no one can run with the ball, so teammates pass to one another to move the ball across the field. Each team tries to move the ball down the field and throw it at a frame. A team earns a point if the other team fails to catch the ball when it bounces off the frame. The space surrounding the frame is off-limits. If the ball bounces in this area, or if a player enters it, the other team gets the ball. The boys learned and practiced the game throughout the week. On the final day of camp, parents watched the boys play in a Tchoukball tournament.

On the first day of each session, counselors played a brief demonstration game. They often used this opportunity to show off for the boys and one another - throwing the ball harder than necessary, jumping higher than they needed to to catch passes, and passing the ball behind their backs. A few minutes into the game, Mike stopped the counselors and told them to tone it down. Addressing the campers, he said " You don't have to play that way. They've been playing for a week (this was the second session of camp). Start with focusing on solid passes." He told the boys they were learning and shouldn't give anyone a hard time for dropping the ball. Instead, they should just say "we'll do better next time." As the week wore on, however, counselors **increasingly** encouraged their campers to compete, hustle, and display athleticism in practice. If there was a lack of effort (such as walking or jogging slowly instead of running), some counselors would try to motivate players by yelling "are you being the best you can be?" or "Is this helping your team?" They also made sarcastic comments, such as "wow guys, one heck of a game we got here!" when boys were moving slowly. They loudly celebrated when their campers beat other teams during practice games. The assistant counselors were the most vocal in their celebrations - yelling, flexing muscles, and hurling the foam ball to the ground in the style of pro-football players' touchdown celebrations.

The overarching activity at GLEAM was very different. Throughout the week, girls rewrote lyrics to the Tim McGraw song "Humble and Kind." They performed their rendition of the song for their parents on the last day of camp. Everything started with a lesson on being humble. Miss Carly asked her

group of third and fourth grade girls what humble meant. The girls answered with responses like “don’t brag” and “being nice.” Carly said it also meant not having a big head. She then gave an example:

“What if I said you were the best at kickboxing?” she asked (her campers had just come from a kickboxing fitness session). “What would you say if you were humble?”

“Everyone was good” one girl said.

“Yes, or maybe you would say thank you, but you would not be telling everyone you are the best” said Carly.

She then played a cover version of “Humble and Kind” a GLEAM counselor had recorded (one lyric was modified since the original song briefly references sexual activity). Throughout the week, this song was played when there was downtime and while campers worked quietly on projects. Each group of girls rewrote a stanza of lyrics to create a new version of the song that reflected the humble and kind theme.

Near the end of the week, the teachers passed out the new lyrics for the final performance. The first lines of rewritten lyrics were:

No act of kindness is ever wasted
No matter how big or how small
Help others to shine
Always stay humble and kind

The lessons girls learned from rewriting, singing, and performing “Humble and Kind” were to be confident, to be a force for good in the world, and, above all, to always stay humble and kind.

We do not want to minimize the quality of either camp. Both were very well run and taught important lessons. The potential problem is that boy and girl campers learned different lessons about self-confidence, personal expression, teamwork, and leadership. These differences are divided down gender lines, reinforcing gender divisions and potentially maintaining gender stereotypes.

Take the differences in competition. The choice of Tchoukball was the result of a thoughtful decision. Tchoukball is not a full contact sport. It is not hierarchical since there is not a set division of positions; everyone does the same things. It is also collaborative - players cannot run with the ball and rely on passing to score goals. These reasons, along with the assumptions that it is easy to learn and most of the boys were not familiar with it before camp (and are all learning a new skill), made it a good choice of activity. Nonetheless, the skills taught in Tchoukball align with gendered expectations that boys should

be assertive, competitive, and athletic. Again, there is nothing inherently problematic about developing these skills. The problem arises when we compare these skills to the very different skills, such as singing about being humble and kind, that girls develop at GLEAM. These differences will likely reproduce gendered patterns of leadership capital accumulation and skill development. These findings coincide with research that shows girls are less comfortable with competition than boys, are still socialized to downplay aggressiveness and competitiveness, and experience difficulty balancing competition with being a nice girl (Friedman 2013). This is one way organizations and authorities that are attempting to minimize gender disparities and develop strong leaders actually reproduce differences and inequality.

Camp organization perpetuated gender differences in competition and skill development. Most counselors were unaware of the leadership training children on the other side of the binary received. As a result, counselors did not have a clear opportunity to identify differences between GLEAM and BEAM or reflect on how these differences might contribute to gender inequality. Differences in training and skill development can lead to future gender disparities in leadership (Fitzsimmons and Callan 2016). If the majority of authority figures when campers enter the workplace continue to be men, it is likely that the more assertive, competitive, task-oriented style of leadership taught at BEAM will be privileged. If this is the case, while GLEAM campers are learning important lessons about personal development, self-confidence, kindness, expression, and empathy, the style of leadership they have been socialized to embrace may be seen as “inappropriate” or “not the way things are done” in masculine or gender neutral environments (Alfrey and Twine 2017). Furthermore, if men and women do not realize they have been taught different styles of leadership, differences in how they approach challenges and manage others may reinforce gender essentialist beliefs. They may see leadership differences as natural instead of recognizing how differential gender socialization and leadership training contributed to these outcomes.

Emotions and Gendered Expectations for Leadership

In this section, we examine how GLEAM and BEAM counselors discussed emotions and how emotions relate to perceptions of leadership ability. BEAM counselors rarely discussed emotions. When they mentioned emotions, it was usually during brief statements at the end of an activity. GLEAM counselors

discussed emotions in an elaborate manner, in varied contexts, and at multiple points every day. While GLEAM campers will likely develop more emotional awareness and competence as a result of their training, these qualities are not typically associated with strong leadership. Instead, GLEAM campers may be seen as more communally (as opposed to competitively) oriented and more emotionally inclined (as opposed to rational and unemotional) (Shields 2013; Brescoll 2016; Eagly and Heilman 2016). These perceptions reinforce beliefs that girls and women are better suited for “taking care” than “taking charge” (Hoyt and Murphy 2016).

Many GLEAM activities required campers to imagine what others were feeling. This was seen in the “cotton and sandpaper words” activity, which occurred on the second day of camp. Kindness was the day’s theme. One of the authors observed Miss Caroline’s group of first and second grade campers. The following description is from her notes:

Caroline explained that some words were mean and hurtful and felt like sandpaper when you heard them and other words were nice and soft and fluffy and felt like cotton. She passed around pieces of cotton and sandpaper so the girls could feel each. Then she asked the girls to think of examples of cotton and sandpaper words.

Miss Jen (another counselor who had joined Caroline’s group with her group of third and fourth grade campers) asked the girls to shout out sandpaper words. They said things like “you’re fat,” “you’re ugly,” “get lost,” “you suck,” “you can’t play with me,” “you’re gross.”

Jen had a tube of toothpaste. She squeezed toothpaste onto a paper plate every time a girl said something mean until all the toothpaste was out of the tube. Caroline and Jen compared the difficulty of putting toothpaste back in the tube to regaining trust and friendship after you say something mean. They said it takes a lot of work to make someone feel better after you’ve made her feel bad. So the girls should all think about what they say before they say it and use cotton words instead of sandpaper words.

Following this discussion, each girl was given a paper doll called Ginger. Caroline read a story about how Ginger moved to a new school and was teased and bullied. Campers were instructed to rip their dolls every time someone in the story said something mean to Ginger. When the story was over and the Gingers were ripped to pieces, the girls glued their dolls back together on sheets of construction paper. Then they were asked to write kind words on one side of Ginger and mean words on the other. Most girls wrote the same things. The mean side listed phrases like “you’re ugly,” “you’re fat,” “you’re stupid,” “you can’t sit with me,” “what’s wrong with you,” “you’re weird.” The nice side had phrases like “I like your hair,” “you’re pretty,” “you’re smart,” “you can play with me,” “you look nice.” The lesson was that

even though Ginger can be put together again, she is scarred by the mean words. The counselors told the girls that they have the power to make others feel good or bad, so they should use their power to make others feel good.

The theme of kindness was reiterated in every activity that day. For example, it was incorporated into a science activity described in one author's notes:

For this activity, the girls went outside. They were in groups of five. Each group had a small container the size of a film canister filled with citric acid, another filled with baking soda, a large plastic bowl with liquid soap, and a cup of water. They were supposed to mix the ingredients together to make a "foamy explosion."

The group I was with produced a large and foamy bowl of bubbles. The mixtures of the other groups did not react as anticipated and stayed liquidy instead of bubbling up. After this happened, Miss Ashley said sometimes experiments do not work and that is ok.

We came back inside and Ashley talked about how feelings can explode or build up like bubbles if you don't express them and how if someone says something mean, you need to tell a friend so that your feelings do not build up and cause an explosion. Ashley reinforced the message by talking about how mean words can mix and amplify like the ingredients combined in the activity. Although this discussion occurred in a science session, it did not focus on chemical reactions. There was no discussion of why the combination of ingredients might produce a "foamy explosion." Instead, the lesson focused on the importance of expressing feelings.

These extended lessons on emotions and how to treat others sharply contrast with the way BEAM counselors dealt with feelings and the power of words. There were not explicit lessons devoted to emotions. Instead, counselors would occasionally intervene when they heard campers say things they judged to be excessively inappropriate or insensitive. The following example occurred during a fitness session. The owner of a local crossfit gym visited camp, demonstrated proper technique for push-ups, squats, burpees, and running, and led the boys in a workout. During the squats portion of the workout, some campers complained that they were hot and tired. Jonah, one of the assistant counselors, told the boys to "stop being a bunch of babies." Another counselor, Ethan, acted like he was going to climb on the back of a boy who was complaining.

"Do squats with me on your back" Ethan said. It seemed Ethan wanted to distract the complaining boys by joking around.

"That's gay" said the boy.

"Don't say gay" Ethan said immediately.

"That's retarded" the boy said.

"Don't say retarded" Ethan said.

Ethan then walked away, ending the interaction.

When BEAM counselors did directly address emotions, a brief or nonverbal response sufficed. On the first day of camp, Mr. Jake asked his group of campers to rank their level of enthusiasm for the upcoming week from one (very anxious or unexcited) to 10 (“super stoked”). Campers were hesitant to answer and looked around nervously or stared at the floor.

“C’mon” Jake urged. “Everybody hold up your hands to show me your answer,” indicating the boys should hold up 1-10 fingers to demonstrate their level of excitement. One boy held up 1 finger, the rest held up 5-10. “That’s ok, that’s cool” Jake said. “By the end you’ll all be 10s. You’ll be stoked.” Then he moved on to outlining the plan for the day.

This interaction was characteristic of the cursory discussion of feelings at BEAM.

GLEAM programming presented meanness and negativity as problematic for advancement and development. To be a strong leader, girls were told they need to recognize their own emotions and consider others’ feelings. They were repeatedly encouraged to be kind and required to participate in acts of kindness throughout the week. In this way, they were taught a slightly more enlightened version of what middle class white women have been taught for centuries (Becker 2005). Feminine power is still framed as stemming from women’s ability to relate to others, to be kind, and to nurture emotional needs. This framing was omnipresent at GLEAM.

BEAM campers learned to treat one another with respect, or at least not to actively disrespect others. They were not explicitly encouraged to think about their own emotions, other people’s feelings, or how their actions might influence others. These observations are in line with research that shows boys and men often avoid discussing or displaying emotions because they see them as stigmatized and feminine (McCormack 2013; Way 2013). If emotions are not addressed or portrayed as important, it is likely this stigma will remain.

This very different treatment of emotions in the context of leadership may lead to future difficulties when men and women work together or when a woman is in a position of authority over a man or vice versa. Differential leadership training regarding the management of emotions may lead men

and women to see contrasting leadership styles (and the gendered bodies they are attached to) as ineffective or illegitimate. A man may see his woman boss's concern for employees' feelings as coddling and inappropriate for the workplace. A woman may see her man boss's reluctance to address emotions as evidence that he is emotionally stunted, immature, or unconcerned with employee well-being. This judgement prevents the development of mutual respect and authentic relationships. Different leadership styles may also prevent people from seeing someone of another gender as a valid role model and maintain gender disparities in mentoring, hiring, employment.

We do not believe the solution to the gender disparity in emotional training and stigmatization of emotions is to stop discussing emotions with girls. Instead, the best course may be to acknowledge emotions are not masculine or feminine; they are human. Some boys and men may resist discussing emotions as long as they are seen as feminine (McCormack 2013). Work needs to be done to overcome this resistance, but change is possible (Way 2013). Essentialist beliefs about emotion can be disrupted by pointing out the contrast between the belief that men are inexpressive and real life examples of men expressing many different emotions (Shields 2013). There is concern that men who do address emotions will be just as stigmatized as women. Yet some leadership research suggests this is not the case (Fitzsimmons & Callan 2016). Men can be attuned to emotions and communicate in a warm manner without having their leadership ability questioned, suggesting a greater emphasis on emotions for men would not negatively affect perceptions of them or their future opportunities. This is not a perfect solution. It does not address the general cultural devaluation of the feminine (Schippers 2007; Budgeon 2014). Yet emphasizing the omnipresence of emotions may help to disrupt beliefs that women are "too emotional" to be great leaders. Therefore, this may be a practical step toward better incorporating emotional competence into boys' leadership training without simply masculinizing emotions.

CONCLUSION

This research contributes to our understanding of how well-intentioned actors reproduce gender inequality. Gender is a stratification system that cannot be reduced to individual choices (Risman 2004). Yet counselors taught simple, individual-level strategies to develop leadership skills, including cultivating

a positive attitude and finding positive role models. They portrayed gender inequalities as primarily a thing of the past, obscuring the dynamics maintaining modern gender hierarchy (Schippers 2007; Budgeon 2014). There are limits to what can be accomplished in a fun and extracurricular summer environment. There are also limits to what elementary and middle school aged children can understand when it comes to gender inequality. Yet the single-minded emphasis on free choice obscures the chronic problems people face when they run into unacknowledged gender barriers (McRobbie 1991; Messner 2011). A more nuanced discussion of gender inequality, beyond the individualistic “don’t listen to other people when they say you can’t do things” messages, could help campers to recognize, understand, and potentially chip away at gender boundaries (Budgeon 2014; Rauscher and Cooky 2015). Finding age-appropriate ways to address more complex gendered leadership issues head on would help campers to understand and deal with these issues a more intentional and enlightened manner.

Even on the individual level, however, these camps will likely contribute to gender disparities in leadership. Emphasizing competition at BEAM while avoiding it at GLEAM means boys are more likely to accumulate the leadership capital competition has shown to produce in the form of confidence, independence, ambition, and strategizing skills (Eagly and Heilman 2016; Fitzsimmons & Callan 2016). As a result, boys will continue to be seen as more “natural” leaders than girls. The emphasis on emotions at GLEAM, but not BEAM, reinforces the association between emotion and femininity (Becker 2005). This is problematic because being emotional, or concerned with the emotions of others, is associated with poor leadership (Shields 2013). Overall, the skills boys learn at BEAM are much more clearly correlated with leadership than the skills girls learn at GLEAM. This means camp training will likely reproduce gender gaps in leadership (Eagly and Heilman 2016).

One way to disrupt gender stereotypical leadership training would be to integrate the camps. Gender segregation works to normalize the gender binary and conceal evidence that might otherwise challenge essentialist beliefs (Travers 2008; Messner 2011). Spending large amounts of time with same gender peers exaggerates gendered behaviors and attitudes and reduces opportunities for cross gender interaction (Halpern et al. 2011). Gender segregation also guarantees that gender will act as a salient

organizing principle (Musto 2014). Co-ed sports, educational, and leadership programs help counter the gender essentialist attitudes children develop in gender-segregated arenas (Messner 2011).

On the other hand, counselors and camp directors were committed to single gender environments. In informal conversations, GLEAM counselors discussed their beliefs that gender segregation helped build girls' confidence and created a safe space where they felt freer to be themselves and make mistakes. BEAM counselors' rationales for gender segregation reflect cultural tropes of feminine stigmatization and masculine privilege (Budgeon 2014). They felt enrollments would drop if camps were integrated because boys would be less interested in a co-ed camp. Teachers and other stakeholders at same gender schools express similar beliefs (Pahlke et al. 2014). Given the commitment to gender segregated camps, we believe the most viable option for decreasing gender disparities in this type of leadership training involves a more concerted effort to decrease gender stereotypical messaging, a clearer discussion of the role gender plays in leadership opportunities, and more hands on training for recognizing and navigating gendered leadership outcomes.

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